TESTIMONY OF U.S. SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON PROGRESS IN AFGHANISTAN
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. I apologize for the distraction of having to hold my hand in the air, but the surgeon tells me that I need to keep it above my heart for several more weeks.

Thank you for this opportunity to update the Committee on our progress in the war on terror.

While we have made good progress in a relatively short period of time, let there be no doubt: this war is far from over. The road ahead will be difficult and dangerous. We face determined adversaries. They have demonstrated ingenuity and a callous disregard for innocent human life. Victory will not come easily or quickly—it will require patience from Americans at home, and the courage of our service men and women abroad. Fortunately, patience and courage are virtues our nation has in abundance. And I have no doubt that we will prevail.

Last fall, when President Bush announced the start of the war on terrorism, he declared war not just on the perpetrators of the deadly attacks of September 11th, but against all terrorists of global reach, their organizations and sponsors.

He made clear his determination that terrorists that threaten us will find no safe haven, no sanctuary, anywhere—and that their state sponsors will be held accountable, and made to understand there is a heavy price to be paid for financing, harboring, or otherwise supporting terrorists. And he issued a worldwide call to arms, inviting all freedom-loving nations to join us in this fight.

Mr. Chairman, in the intervening months, the world has responded to the President's call. The global coalition President Bush assembled comprises some 70 nations. They are helping in many different ways. Most are sharing intelligence. Many are seizing terrorist assets or breaking up terrorist cells on their territory. Others are providing airlift, basing, over-flight and refueling, or are contributing air, sea and ground forces, combat air patrols, mine clearing and special operations. Some are helping quietly, others openly. But each is making important contributions to the global war on terror.

We are now roughly nine months into this war—still closer to the beginning than to the end. But while much difficult work remains before us, it is worth taking a moment to reflect and

take stock of just how much U.S. and coalition forces have accomplished thus far in reversing the tide of terrorism.

At this time last year, Afghanistan was a pariah state. The Taliban regime was in power and brutally repressed the Afghan people. The country was a sanctuary for thousands of foreign terrorists, who had free range to train, plan and organize attacks on innocent civilians across the globe. There was harsh repressive rule. The economy and banking sector were in a state of collapse, and the country was financially dependent on terrorist networks and overseas Islamic extremist elements. A humanitarian crisis of considerable proportions loomed. Humanitarian assistance was disrupted, famine was pervasive, and refugees were fleeing the country by the hundreds of thousands.

Consider just some of the human rights reports which detailed conditions in Afghanistan before the arrival of coalition forces:

According to the State Department's February 2001 Human Rights Report, "The Taliban continued to commit numerous, serious and systemic abuses. Citizens were unable to change their government or choose their leaders peacefully. The Taliban carried out summary justice...and...were responsible for political and other extra-judicial killings, including targeted killings, summary executions, and deaths in custody.... Women and girls were subjected to rape, kidnapping, and forced marriage."

Amnesty International's 2001 human rights report declared that Afghans suffered pervasive "human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention and torture.... The *Taliban* continued to impose harsh restrictions on personal conduct and behavior as a means of enforcing their particular interpretation of Islamic law.... Young women living in areas captured by the *Taliban* ... were reportedly abducted by guards and taken against their will as 'wives' for *Taliban* commanders."

Human Rights Watch's report for 2001 described a situation where "Taliban forces subjected local civilians to a ruthless and systematic policy of collective punishment. Summary executions, the deliberate destruction of homes, and confiscation of farmland were recurrent practices in these campaigns." There was "systematic discrimination against women.... Violations of the dress code...could result in public beatings and lashing by the Religious Police, who wielded leather batons reinforced with metal studs. Women were not permitted to work outside the home except in the area of health care, and girls over eight years old were not permitted to attend school. The decrees contributed to an illiteracy level for women of over 90 percent." And all of this enforced by the so-called Minister for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

Human Right Watch also reported widespread "harassment of international aid agency staff," who were in some cases taken hostage. According to the State Department report, in August 2001 "the Taliban arrested eight foreign aid workers affiliated with an NGO on charges of proselytizing. An estimated 48 Afghan employees of the NGO also were arrested

and reportedly also charged with apostasy.... The Taliban reportedly stated that 59 children who had been taught by the arrested workers were sent to a correctional facility."

Mr. Chairman, what a difference a year makes.

Today, thanks to coalition efforts—and the remarkable courage of our men and women in uniform—the Taliban have been driven from power, al Qaeda is on the run, Afghanistan is no longer a base of global terrorist operations or a breeding ground for radical Islamic militancy, the beatings by religious police and executions in soccer stadiums have stopped, the humanitarian crisis has been averted, international workers are no longer held hostage, aid is once again flowing, and the Afghan people have been liberated. Afghanistan is a free nation, where aid workers can provide humanitarian aid, girls can study, women can work, the people can choose their leaders peacefully and refugees can return.

Through the recent Loya Jirga process, the Afghan people have exercised their right of self-determination. More than 1,500 delegates from all 32 provinces and all ethnic backgrounds came together under one roof to chart their nation's political future. A new president has been selected, a new cabinet has been sworn in, a transitional government representative of the Afghan people has been established to lead the nation for the next two years, until a constitutional Loya Jirga is held.

The new Afghan government is still in its early stages, and it doesn't yet have the institutions of government to direct, such as internal security, tax collection and the like. But it has begun the process of working to develop the banking sector, tax laws, and a new currency. New trade and commercial investment policies are also being put in place, with the aim of building foreign investor confidence. A corps of civil servants is being established, with pay under UN supervision, and ministries are beginning to function. The judicial system is being reformed, so that rule of law can take root. A growing civil society is emerging, with open political discourse and an emerging free press. We're fortunate that their leadership is taking seriously the challenge of self-government.

With self-government must eventually come self-sufficiency—and that self-sufficiency must, over time, also extend to security. That is why we are working with the new Afghan government to lay the foundations for longer-term stability and to reverse the conditions that allowed terrorist regimes to take root in the first place. The U.S. and others are helping to train a new Afghan National Army—a force committed not to one group or faction but to the defense of the entire nation, which we hope will allow Afghans to take responsibility for their own security rather than relying on foreign forces. Last week, the 1st Battalion of more than

300 soldiers graduated—and there are an additional 600 Afghan soldiers being trained in two battalions. In all, we expect to train 18 battalions—over 10,000 soldiers—by the end of 2003. We are also "training the trainers" so that the process can eventually become self-sustaining. Already some 38 countries have offered weapons, equipment, funds or support for this effort.

We have also helped to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. The U.S. and coalition partners have delivered over 500,000 metric tons of food since the start of the war—enough to feed almost 7 million needy Afghans. Thanks to those efforts, the grim predictions of starvation last winter did not come to pass. Today, the United States is providing over $450 million in humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people.

The Department of Defense has allotted $10 million dollars to dozens of humanitarian projects throughout Afghanistan. U.S. military civil affairs teams have dug wells, built hospitals, repaired roads, bridges and irrigation canals. We have rebuilt 49 schools in eight different regions. Thanks to those efforts, some 30,000 boys and girls—the hope and future of Afghanistan—are back in school. One civil affairs team has even introduced Afghan kids to Little League baseball. They organized two teams, which have been practicing twice a week for the past several weeks using donated baseball supplies. Last Friday, they held Afghanistan's first Little League game.

It must be emphasized that coalition partners are making important contributions. De-mining teams from Norway, Britain, Poland and Jordan have helped clear land mines from hundreds of thousands of square meters of terrain, although there are still an enormous number of land mines in that country. Jordan built a hospital in Mazar-e Sharif that has now treated more than 92,000 patients, including 22,000 children. Spain and Korea have also built hospitals, and Japan has pledged $500 million to rehabilitate Afghanistan. Russia has cleared out and rebuilt the Salang Tunnel, the main artery linking Kabul with the North, allowing transportation of thousands of tons of food, medicine and supplies.

With the cooperation of over 90 countries, some 2,400 individuals around the world have been detained and interviewed, and over 500 enemy combatants are currently under DoD control. They are being interrogated, and are yielding information that is helping to prevent further violence and bloodshed.

For example, with the help of our Pakistani allies, we captured a senior al-Qaeda leader, Abu Zubaydah, who in turn provided information that led to the capture of others such as Jose Padilla—an American al-Qaeda operative.

Al-Qaeda forces left behind valuable intelligence information—computer hard drives, diskettes, laptops, videos, notebooks with information that has given us insight into their capabilities, how they operate, and in some cases actionable intelligence about planned terrorist operations. For example, videotapes found in an al-Qaeda safe house in Afghanistan revealed detailed plans of a plot to strike U.S. targets in Singapore. Working with Singapore authorities, that al-Qaeda cell was broken up and their planned attack disrupted.

These successes must not lull us into complacency. For every terrorist plot we discover and every terrorist cell we disrupt, there are dozens of others in the works. Al Qaeda operates not only in Afghanistan, but in more than 60 countries including the U.S. Undoubtedly, coalition efforts have made recruitment harder, planning harder, and moving between countries harder. But they have trained literally thousands of terrorists who are now at large across the globe. These "sleeper" cells undoubtedly have plans for further attacks. They had raised a good deal of money, and they still have financial backers giving them money.

Moreover, al-Qaeda is not the only global terrorist network. And terrorist networks have growing relationships with terrorist states that harbor and finance them—and may one day share weapons of mass destruction with them. What this means is that Afghanistan is only the first stage in a long, difficult and dangerous war on terrorism.

Our goal in Afghanistan is to ensure that that country does not, again, become a terrorist training ground. That work is, of course, by no means complete. Taliban and al Qaeda fugitives are still at large. Some are in Afghanistan, others fled across the borders waiting for the opportunity to return. They continue to pose a threat. In recent weeks, coalition forces have come under attack again in Kandahar and Oruzgan, and Pakistani forces have engaged al Qaeda in a number of firefights, reminders of the dangers that continue to exist.

Moreover, there are still ethnic tensions within Afghanistan, and Afghanistan is still highly dependent on foreign assistance—both financial aid and humanitarian relief. The country lacks agricultural self-sufficiency, there are periodic outbreaks of cholera and dysentery, and a high infant mortality rate due to poor hygiene and inadequate medical services.

These are real challenges. But two things should be clear: One, Afghanistan is clearly a much better place to live today than it was a year ago. And two, the United States and its international partners are making a maximum effort to assist Afghanistan's new government in economic, humanitarian, security, and other fields.

Afghan leaders coming to Washington all attest that the security picture in the country is sound. The Taliban have so far failed to mount their often-predicted spring offensive. Despite numerous threats, the Loya Jirga convened with no serious security incidents. And conflicts among regional commanders have been dampened –often by discreet U.S. influence exerted by our personnel. The security situation, while not ideal, is significantly improved from what we found on our arrival nine months ago, when the Taliban controlled and oppressed 90% of the country.

The best measure of progress is the flow of people. Before the war began, thousands upon thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons had fled their homes to escape Taliban repression. Since January, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons have returned to their homes. The Afghan people are voting with their feet. They're coming back to their homes. That is a ringing vote of confidence in the progress that's being made in Afghanistan.

With the removal of the Taliban regime, and the efforts to break up large pockets of al-Qaeda as they tried to regroup, coalition efforts in Afghanistan are now focused mostly on smaller operations—cave-by-cave searches, sweeps for arms, intelligence, and smaller pockets of terrorists as they have dispersed. Indeed, the humanitarian effort I have described has been of invaluable assistance to us in these operations.

By making clear from the beginning that this was not a war against Islam, by keeping our footprint modest and partnering with Afghan forces that opposed the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and by demonstrating our concern for the welfare of the Afghan people through the delivery of humanitarian relief from the first days of the war, we showed the Afghan people that we were coming as a force of liberation, not a force of occupation.

In fact, out of 32 provinces in Afghanistan, our forces have experienced harassment attacks in only a few provinces—in the former Taliban strongholds of southern and eastern Afghanistan. In most of the country coalition forces have been welcomed as liberators.

That, in turn, has paid dividends in the hunt for Taliban and al-Qaeda. For example, we have been finding additional caches of weapons several times a week, not because we're clever or stumbled on them, but because local Afghans have come to us and told us where those caches are located. They are leading U.S. Special Forces and military personnel to those caches, so that they can be gathered up and either destroyed or provided to the new Afghan National Army. This too is a vote of confidence in coalition efforts.

Understandably, as our military mission has changed and evolved, some forces are now rotating out of Afghanistan, including from the U.K. and Canada—even as they continue to play a critical role elsewhere in the world. This should not be taken as a sign that the effort in Afghanistan is wrapping up. To the contrary, in recent weeks:

- Turkey has increased its Afghan presence, sending over 1,300 troops to Kabul to assume leadership of the International Security Assistance Force.
- Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands will soon deploy F-16 fighters to Kyrgyzstan for air operations over Afghanistan.
- Romania has deployed an infantry battalion to Afghanistan and has offered an infantry mountain company, a nuclear, biological and chemical response company and four MiG-21 fighters, and Slovakia will soon deploy an engineering unit.
- Special Operation forces from Canada, Germany, Australia and other nations continue to work with U.S. Special Forces teams on the ground, combing through the caves, searching for Taliban and al Qaeda fugitives, gathering critical intelligence information.

Moreover, our hunt for terrorist networks is not limited to Afghanistan. At this moment, planes and ships from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, the U.K. and others patrol the seas and skies in distant corners of the globe, conducting aerial surveillance, leadership interdiction and maritime interception operations. France and Italy have both deployed their carrier battle groups to support Operation Enduring Freedom. Germany has taken a leadership role with surface naval forces operating around the Horn of Africa. Intelligence and law enforcement agencies from dozens of countries are helping to seize terrorist assets, freeze their bank accounts, close front companies, and disrupt terrorist cells as they plan future attacks. Significant arrests have been made on many continents, from Europe to Southeast Asia.

The war on terrorism is a global campaign against a global adversary. We learned on September 11th, that in a world of international finance, communications, and transportation, even relatively isolated individuals or organizations can have global reach—and the ability to cause unprecedented destruction on innocent civilians.

The challenge for us is to find a way to live in that 21st Century world as free people. Let there be no doubt: we can do so. But it requires new ways of thinking, new ways of fighting, and new strategies for defending our people and our way of life.

In the war on terror, an enormous advantage accrues to the attacker. A terrorist can strike at any place, at any time, using any conceivable technique. And it is physically impossible to defend our people in every place, at every time, against every conceivable technique. So the only way to deal with that threat is to take the war to the terrorists—to go after them where they are, and kill them, capture them or otherwise disrupt them. As the President has said, "the first and best way to secure America's homeland is to attack the enemy where he hides and plans." This is what we have done, and are doing.

The war on terrorism began in Afghanistan, to be sure, but it will not end there. It will not end until terrorist networks have been rooted out, wherever they exist. It will not end until the state sponsors of terror are made to understand that aiding, abetting and harboring terrorists has deadly consequences for those that try it. It will not end until those developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons end their threat to innocent men, women and children.

It will not end until our people—and the people of the world's free nations—can once again live in peace and free from fear.

Mr. Chairman, I will be happy to take your questions.

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